APPENDIX Q

TACTICAL ROAD MARCHES AND ASSEMBLY AREAS

Section I. TACTICAL ROAD MARCHES

Q-1. GENERAL

The ground movement of troops can be accomplished by administrative marches, tactical movements, and tactical marches.

Although administrative marches may break up unit integrity they are used in rear areas where speed and best use of transportation assets expedite movement.

Tactical movements, as described in chapter 4, are used when contact with enemy forces is a possibility.

Tactical marches are normally used to move units from rear areas to assembly areas in preparation for the conduct of a mission. Although a company may be required to conduct a tactical march, the platoon and company normally move as part of the battalion.

The tactical march is conducted when speed is essential, unit integrity must be maintained, road nets are available, and enemy contact is limited.

The following definitions apply to tactical road marches and foot marches:

ARRIVAL TIME. The time the head of a column reaches a designated point or line.

CLEARANCE TIME. The time the tail of a column passes a designated point or line.

COLUMN (TIME) GAP. The space between two consecutive elements calculated in units of length (meters) or units of time (minutes), measured from the rear of one element to the front of the following element.

COMPLETION TIME. The time the tail of a column passes the release point.

CRITICAL POINT. A selected point along the route of march used for reference in giving instructions; any point along the route where interference with the troop movement may occur.

MARCH UNIT. A unit that moves and halts at the command of a single commander — normally one of the smaller troop units such as a platoon or company.

PACE SETTER (VEHICLE). A vehicle in the lead element and responsible for regulating speed.

PASS TIME. The time between the movement of the first element past a given point and the movement of the last element past the same point.

RATE OF MARCH. The average kilometers-per-hour traveled.

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RELEASE POINT. A well-defined point on a route at which the elements composing a column return to the authority of their respective commanders.

SERIAL. A grouping of march units under a single commander. It is usually a battalion, brigade, or larger unit. For convenience in planning, scheduling, and control, it is given a numerical or alphabetical designation.

START POINT. A well-defined point on a route where the elements of the move come under the control of the movement commander. It is at this point that the column is formed by the successive passing of each of the elements in the column.

VEHICLE DISTANCE. The space between two consecutive vehicles of an element in the column.

ORGANIZATION OF A MARCH COLUMN. Depending on the size and number of units conducting the move, the battalion is normally formed as a serial with companies and elements of headquarters and headquarters company formed into march units. The entire column is organized into an advance party, main body, and trail party. The advance party consists of a reconnaissance element and a quartering party the trail party is made up of maintenance, recovery, and medical elements; and the main body is made up of the rest of the force.

VEHICLE DISPERSION. The move can be conducted with vehicles traveling in close column, in open column, or by infiltration. Which method to use is determined by the degree of control required to maintain a cohesive unit, and by the terrain that is being traveled — for example, open terrain requires more dispersion than close terrain.

In close column, vehicles are spaced approximately 25 meters apart during daylight. At night, and during reduced visibility vehicles are spaced so that the driver and TL can see the two lights in the blackout marker of the vehicle ahead, if not the vehicle itself. This method takes maximum advantage of traffic capacity of routes but provides little dispersion. Close column is normally used for marches during darkness, and under blackout conditions, and to move rapidly through urban areas to insure integrity and control of the column.

In open columns, the distance between vehicles is increased to provide greater dispersion. Vehicle distance varies from 50 to 100 meters. The increased distance provides greater protection against air and artillery fires, and ground attack by small enemy forces. It also allows the command vehicle and other vehicles not restricted by march orders to pass the column without disrupting its organization.

During a move by infiltration, vehicles are dispatched individually as small groups, or at irregular intervals at a rate that will keep traffic density down and prevent undue massing of vehicles. Infiltration provides the best possible defense against enemy observation and attack. It is suited for tactical road marches when enough time and road space are available and when maximum security, deception, and dispersion are desired.

When vehicles are farther apart than prescribed in open/closed column, they close up by traveling at a prescribed higher speed. This catch-up speed is normally fast enough to allow the column to close up over a long road distance, thus reducing the accordion effect produced by rapid changes in speed. A fixed catch-up

speed also provides an additional satiety factor for the march.

Q-2. CONDUCT OF THE TACTICAL ROAD MARCH

The movement order issued by the company commander includes information on the enemy and friendly situations, destination, route, rate-of-march, catch-up speed, order of march, start point, location and time, vehicle distances, release points, critical points, combat service support, communications, and location of the commander during the march. Many items of a movement order are SOP. Along with the order, the commander normally issues strip maps of the route. A strip map is a sketch of the route of march and contains as a minimum a start point, a release point, and critical points and distances between them. Strip maps should be issued to each squad leader or TL.

Before starting, each march unit has a designated team reconnoiter its route to the start point and determine the amount of time needed to reach it. The company also forms a quartering party element. It links up with the battalion quartering party before moving to the new assembly area. The company quartering party is normally headed by the executive officer or first sergeant and consists of representatives from platoons, company headquarters, and attached elements as necessary The platoon sergeant and other designated persons may be assigned this duty. The battalion and company quartering parties move to the new assembly area before the main body moves. The quartering parties normally move by infiltration. Quartering party activities are a matter of SOP but should include:

Securing the new assembly area.

Searching for indications of enemy activity.

Looking for mines and booby traps.

Selecting routes to platoon locations.

Selecting initial vehicle positions.

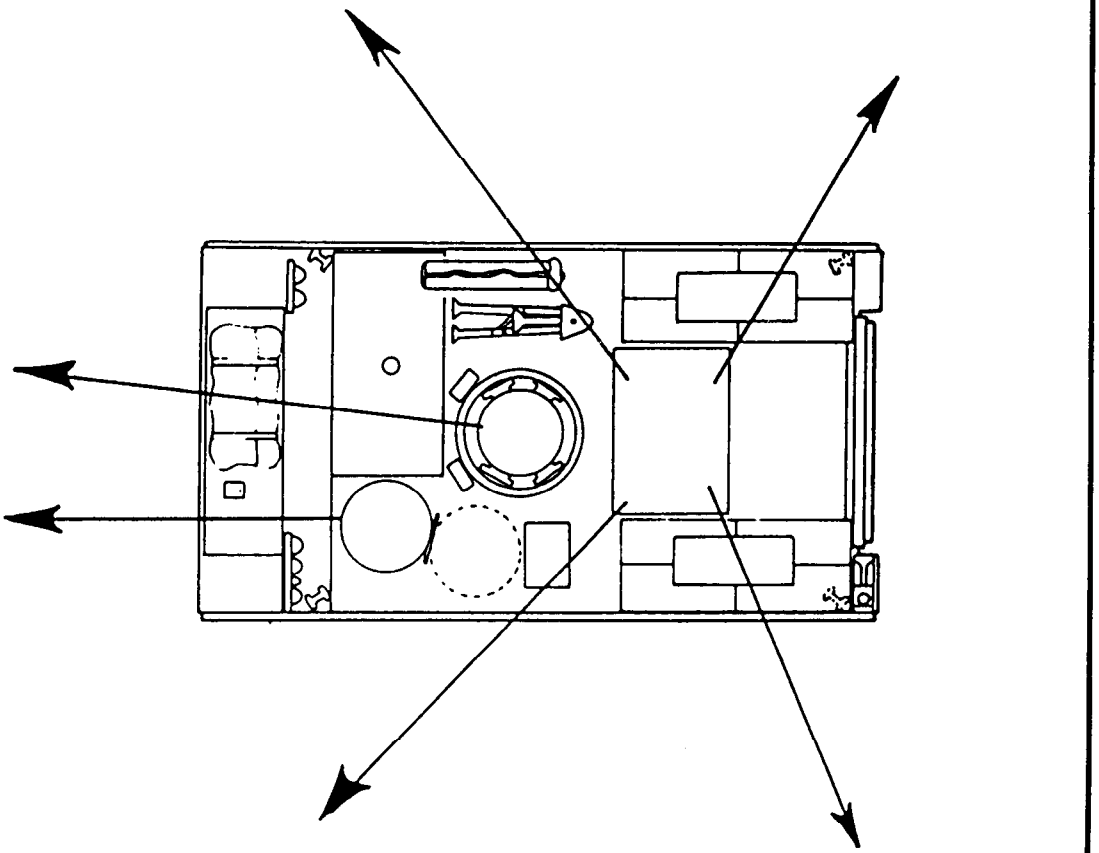
Selecting initial machine gun and Dragon positions.

Meeting platoons at the company release point and guiding vehicles into position.

Although some movement and lining up may be required before starting the move to the start point, ideally vehicles move from their positions directly into their proper place in the march unit. The march unit should proceed to the start point without stopping, arrive there on time, and pass through the start point at the proper speed and interval between vehicles.

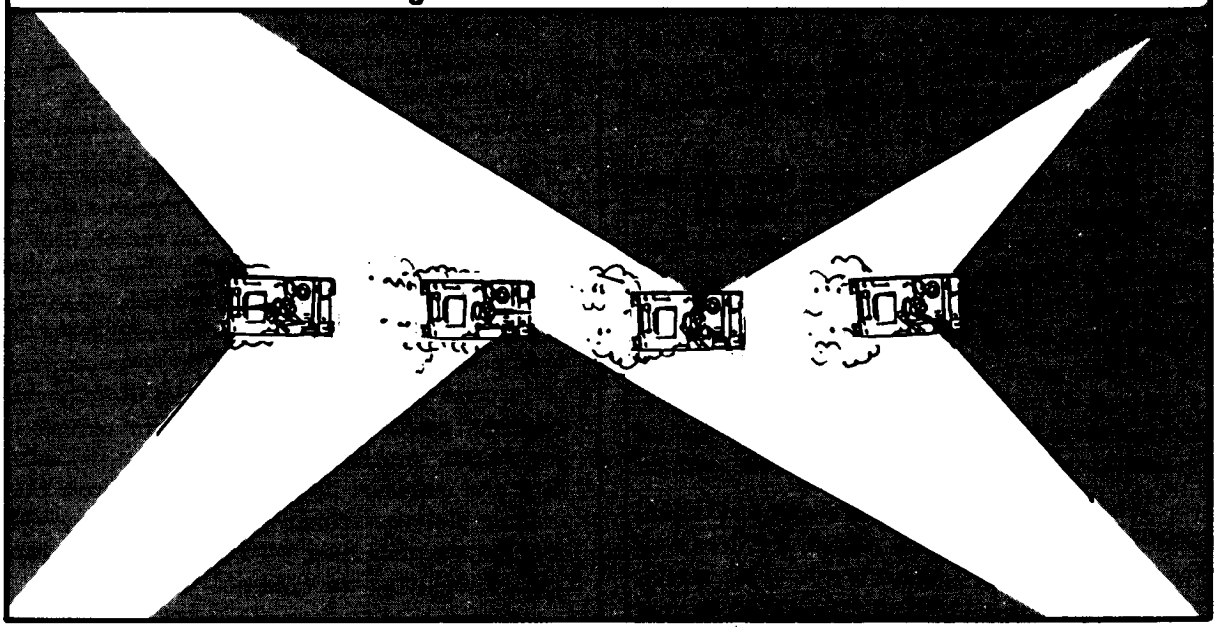
During the move, the crew of each carrier maintains 360-degree observation around the vehicle. The driver observes forward, the squad leader observes to the left of the caliber .50 machine gun, and the gunner observes to the right of the caliber .50 machine gun. Troops inside the cargo hatch observe to the left, right, and rear depending on their location.

Figure Q-1. SECTORS OF OBSERVATION.



Within the patoon column, each vehicle is assigned a sector of fire for the move. Each vehicle orients its caliber .50 machine gun and/or Dragon so that they can rapidly fire on targets within their sector. The assignment of sectors of fire, coupled with the capability of firing from the cargo hatch, provides the platoon with 360-degree security while on the move.

Figure Q-2. SECTORS OF FIRE.



During the move, the platoon must be prepared to take action if attacked by enemy air, artillery, or ground forces. Passive measures against enemy air include:

Maintaining proper interval between vehicles.

Staggering vehicle positions within the column to avoid linear patterns.

Camouflaging vehicles.

Maintaining air observation.

If attacked by enemy air, vehicles in the column move from the axis of attack, either occupying covered and concealed positions or continuing to move, maintaining an evasive course. The unit also engages the aircraft with all available weapons.

If the column receives indirect fire during the move, button-up the vehicle, mask, and move rapidly out of the impact area. Masking is necessary because the enemy can use a mix of HE and chemical ammunition to disrupt movement and achieve maximum casualties. After the company team is through the impact area, the march unit commander will start unmasking procedures.

If engaged by enemy ground forces while on a tactical road march, vehicles attempt to continue movement, or the platoon leader may elect to assault the enemy or fix the enemy for other forces to attack.

Because the primary mission of the unit is to move to a new location in preparation for future operations, additional actions against ground forces depend on the size of the enemy force and instructions from the company team/march unit commanders. If the enemy force consists of snipers or other disruptive forces equipped with small arms, the commander may pass through the force or dispatch a platoon to eliminate it. If the force is larger and presents a danger to the task force as a whole, fragmentary orders may be issued for march unite to leave the route of march, move to covered and concealed positions, and conduct a hasty attack as if conducting a movement to contact.

A march unit can conduct the kinds of halts: scheduled, unscheduled, and vehicle breakdown.

Scheduled halts are planned for maintenance and rest, or to comply with higher level time schedules. At scheduled halts, vehicles pull to the aids of the road but still maintain march distance between vehicles. Dismount teams dismount and establish local security.

Unscheduled halts are caused by unforeseen developments such as obstacles, ambushes, or other enemy activity forward of the platoon which prohibits further movement. If off-road movement is possible, the company team forms a coil for hasty perimeter defense. Platoons occupy a sector of the coil using the clock system. If off-road movement is not possible, the company team forms a herringbone. Dismount teams dismount in heavily wooded areas to improve local security.

When a vehicle becomes disabled and cannot continue the move, the TL directs the driver off the road, so as not to impede traffic. If the vehicle blocks the road, it is towed or pushed away to clear the road. Once the vehicle is clear of the road, the carrier team attempts to repair the vehicle while the dismount team establishes security provides guides, and directs traffic. The platoon to which the disabled vehicle belongs normally continues to move. If the crew gets the vehicle repaired and if the march unit has not passed completely the crew and vehicle rejoin the march unit at the tail end. If the march column has passed, or the crew could not repair the vehicle, the vehicle waits for the serial's trail party. The trail party repairs the vehicle or it tows the vehicle to the battalion assembly, area (location of battalion trains). (On occasion, when fighting strength is critical, the platoon will crossload the disabled vehicle's dismount teams and squad leader.)

NOTE: If the platoon leader's carrier is disabled, the platoon leader moves to another vehicle. If space is available, the FO team should be crossloaded.

On arrival at the battalion RP, the leader of the company team's quartering party moves from a concealed position and guides the march unit to the company RP. Platoon guides direct the platoon's vehicle to their general locations, where the squad leaders (TLs) assume control and select vehicle positions. Vehicles should not stop on roads or in open fields, but should move directly into concealed positions. Normally the first platoon in the column is guided to positions farthest away from the entrance into the assembly area. Succeeding platoons should move as far as possible into the assembly area, with the last platoon closing and securing the entrance.

If the company team must move into an unprepared assembly area, the clock system can be used to rapidly establish a perimeter defense and road security Normally direction of movement is 12 o'clock. The lead platoon usually takes up a third of the perimeter in the sector from 10 o'clock to 2 o'clock with succeeding platoons breaking off left and right, according to the company's SOP.

When movement into an assembly area is conducted at night, platoon guides must use easily recognizable visual signals to insure that the vehicles follow the proper guides. Use of different colored flashlight lenses is one method of identifying platoon guides.

Section II. ASSEMBLY AREAS

Q-3. GENERAL

An assembly area (AA) is occupied by a unit to prepare for future operations. The mechanized infantry platoon normally occupies a portion of the company team AA. The AA is on defensible ground. It should provide concealment, room for dispersion, and good internal routes, as well as provide access to routes forward. Even though an AA is not expected to be a battle position, an all-round defense is organized with men and equipment positioned or dug into provide security from ground and air attack. The amount of preparation at an AA depends on the unit's intended stay

Leaders insure that personnel continue to improve positions until the unit moves.

Priority of work at an AA is normally a matter of SOP, but it may be part of the movement or operation order. Although commanders may have differing priorities, the following are normally included, in the order listed:

(1) Establish local security by dispatching OPs, which should have wire communications with the platoon and be equipped with the M8 chemical-agent alarm. At platoon positions, local security is further achieved by alternating troops from work to watching, thus keeping roughly half the force providing security.

(2) Position vehicles and crew. served weapons where they can best be employed. If Dragons cannot be employed because of terrain restrictions, they should not be dismounted.

(3) Establish communications within the platoon and to the company CP. The platoon sets up a hot loop, connecting the squads to the platoon leader's vehicle by telephone (TA1). To speed the establishment of telephone communications, the platoon leader can take a member of the platoon headquarters element with him to the company CP. As he returns to the platoon AA, a land telephone line can be reeled out from the company CP back to his vehicle. Also, the platoon leader has a person who knows where the company CP is should a messenger be needed. In the AA, radio use at platoon and squad level should be restricted to radio listening silence.

(4) Position remaining squad members. As in the defense, the remaining squad members are positioned to provide security for crew-served weapons, to cover dead space, and to cover avenues of approach. Dismounted troops should prepare hasty fighting positions initially. The following is required:

Clear fields of fire.

Tie in fires between squads and platoons so that uncovered gaps do not exist in the defense.

Prepare range cards for vehicle-mounted weapons and dismounted crew-served weapons. Prepare a platoon sector sketch and forward a copy to the company CP.

Camouflage positions by using the appropriate camouflage screens for vehicles and natural material for infantry fighting positions.

(5) Once the basics are accomplished, alternate squad rest periods while working to improve the defense. Improve the defense by digging fighting positions and providing overhead cover, setting out remote sensors, and establishing security patrols.

Q-4. ACTIONS IN ASSEMBLY AREAS

Assembly areas provide the unit a secure defensible position where the unit can prepare for future operations. During and after the establishment of the defense, the following activities may take place:

Leaders receive and issue orders.

The unit maintains its equipment and weapons.

Personnel conduct personal hygiene.

Leaders inspect.

The unit is resupplied to include distribution of ammunition and refueling of vehicles.

The unit rehearses critical aspects of the upcoming operation.

Weapon systems are checked and small arms are test fired, if possible.

Troops eat and rest.

The unit continues to improve its defenses.